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AN ADDRESS  
AT THE MASSACHUSETTS CLUB  
BOSTON



A  
CONTINENTAL UNION

BY  
WHITELAW REID



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CIVIL SERVICE FOR THE ISLANDS



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AT THE MASSACHUSETTS CLUB, BOSTON

MARCH 3, 1900

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1900



# A CONTINENTAL UNION

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AT THE MASSACHUSETTS CLUB, BOSTON, MARCH 3, 1900



A third of a century ago or more, I had the honor to be a guest at this club, which met then, as now, in Young's Hotel. It has ever since been a pleasure to recall the men of Boston who gathered about the board, interested, as now, in the affairs of the Republic to which they were at once ornament and defence. Frank Bird sat at the head. Near him was Henry Wilson. John M. Forbes was here, and John A. Andrew, and George S. Boutwell, and George L. Stearns, and many another, eager in those times of trial to seek and know the best thing to be done to serve this country of our pride and love. They were practical business men, true Yaukees in the best sense; and they spent no time then in quarrelling over how we got into our trouble. Their one concern was how to get out, to the greatest advantage of the country.

Honored now by another opportunity to meet with the club, I can do no better than profit by this example of your earlier days. You have asked me to speak on some phase of the Philippine question. I would like to concentrate your attention upon the present and practical phase; and to withdraw it for the time from things that are past and cannot be changed.

*Stare decisis.* There are some things settled. Have we not a better and more urgent use for our time now than in showing why some of us would have liked them settled differently? In my State there is a dictum by an eminent Judge of the Court of Appeals, so familiar now as to be a commonplace, to the effect that when that Court has rendered its decision, there are only two things left to the disappointed advocate. One is to accept the result attained, and go to work on it as best he can; the other, to go down to the tavern and "cuss" the Court. I want to suggest to those who dislike the past of the Philippine ques-

Things that  
cannot be  
undone.

tion that there is more important work pressing upon you at this moment than to cuss the Court. You cannot change the past, but you may prevent some threatened sequences, which even in your eyes would be far greater calamities.

There is no use bewailing the war with Spain. Nothing can undo it, and its results are upon us. There is no use arguing that Dewey should have abandoned his conquest. He didn't. There is no use regretting the Peace of Paris. For good or for ill, it is a part of the supreme law of the land. There is no use begrudging the twenty millions. They are paid. There is no use depreciating the islands, East or West. They are the property of the United States, by an immutable title, which, whatever some of our own people say, the whole civilized world recognizes and respects. There is no use talking about getting rid of them;— giving them back to Spain, or turning them over to Aguinaldo, or simply running away from them. Whoever thinks that any one of these things could be done, or is still open to profitable debate, takes his observations,— will you pardon me the liberty of saying it?— takes his observations too closely within the horizon of Boston bay to know the American people.

They have not been persuaded and they cannot be persuaded that this is an inferior Government, incapable of any duty Providence (through the acts of a wicked Administration, if you choose,) may send its way,— duties which other nations could discharge, but we cannot. They do not and will not believe that it was any such maimed, imperfect, misshapen cripple from birth for which our forefathers made a place in the family of Nations. Nor are they misled by the sudden cry that, in a populous region, thronged by the ships and traders of all countries, where their own prosecution of a just war broke down whatever guarantees for order had previously existed, they are violating the natural rights of man, by enforcing order. Just as little are they misled by the other cry that they are violating the right of self-government, and the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States by preparing for the distracted, warring tribes of that region, such local government as they may be found capable of conducting, in their various stages of development from pure barbarism toward civilization. The American people know they are thus proceeding to do just what Jefferson did in the vast region he bought from France— without the consent, by the way, either of its sovereign or its inhabitants. They know they are following in

the exact path of all the constructive statesmen of the Republic, from the days of the man who wrote the Declaration, and of those who made the Constitution, down to the days of the men who conquered California, bought Alaska, and denied the right of self-government to Jefferson Davis. They simply do not believe that a new light has been given to Mr. Bryan, or to the better men who are aiding him, greater and purer than was given to Washington, or to Jefferson, or to Lincoln.

And so I venture to repeat, without qualification or reserve, that what is past cannot be changed. Candid and dispassionate minds, knowing the American people of all political shades and in all sections of the country, can see no possibility that any party in power, whether the present one or its opponent, would or could now or soon, if ever, abandon or give back one foot of the territory gained in the late war, and ours now by the supreme law of the land and with the assent of the civilized world. As well may you look to see California, which your own Daniel Webster, quite in a certain modern Massachusetts style, once declared in the Senate to be not worth a dollar, now abandoned to Mexico.

It seems to me then idle to thresh over old straw when the grain is not only winnowed but gone to the mill. And so I am not here to discuss abstract questions, as for example whether in the year 1898 the United States was wise in going to war with Spain, though on that I might not greatly disagree with the malcontents; or as to the wisdom of expansion; or as to the possibility of a republic's maintaining its authority over a people without their consent. Nor am I here to apologize for my part in making the nation that was in the wrong and beaten in the late war pay for it in territory. I have never thought of denying or evading my own full share of responsibility in that matter. Conscious of a duty done, I am happily independent enough to be measurably indifferent as to a mere present and temporary effect. Whatever the verdict of the men of Massachusetts to-day, I contentedly await the verdict of their sons.

But, on the other hand, I am not here either to launch charges of treason against any opponent of these policies, who nevertheless loves the institutions founded on these shores by your ancestors, and wishes to perpetuate what they created. Least of all would it occur to me to utter a word in disparagement of your senior Senator, of whom it may be said with respectful and almost affectionate regard that he bears a warrant as

No abstractions or apologies or attacks.

authentic as that of the most distinguished of his predecessors to speak for the conscience and the culture of Massachusetts. Nor shall any reproach be uttered by me against another eminent son of the Commonwealth and servant of the Republic, who was expected, as one of the officers of your Club told me, to make this occasion distinguished by his presence. He has been represented as resenting the unchangeable past so sternly that he hopes to aid in defeating the party he has helped to lead through former trials to present glory. If so, and if from the young and unremembering reproach should come, be it ours, silent and walking backward, merely to cast over him the mantle of his own honored service.

**Common duty  
and a common  
danger.**

No, no! Let us have a truce to profitless disputes about what cannot be reversed. Censure us if you must. Even strike at your old associates and your own party if you will, and when you can, without harming causes you hold dear. But for the duty of this hour, consider if there is not a common meeting ground and instant necessity for union in a rational effort to avert present perils. This, then, is my appeal. Disagree as we may about the past, let us to-day at least see straight—see things as they are. Let us suspend disputes about what is done and cannot be undone, long enough to rally all the forces of goodwill, all the undoubted courage and zeal and patriotism that are now at odds, in a devoted effort to meet the greater dangers that are upon us.

For the enemy is at the gates. More than that, there is some reason to fear that, through dissensions from within, he may gain the citadel. In their eagerness to embarrass the advocates of what has been done, and with the vain hope of in some way undoing it, and so lifting this Nation of seventy-five millions bodily backward two years on its path, there are many who are still putting forth all their energies in straining our Constitution and defying our history, to show that we have no possessions whose people are not entitled to citizenship and ultimately to Statehood. Grant that, and instead of reversing engines safely in mid-career, as they vainly hope, they must simply plunge us over the precipice. The movement began in the demand that our Dingley tariff—as a matter of right, not of policy, for most of these people denounce the tariff itself as barbarous—that our Dingley tariff should of necessity be extended over Puerto Rico as an integral part of the United States. Following an assent



to this must have come inevitably all the other rights and privileges belonging to citizenship, and then no power could prevent the admission of the State of Puerto Rico.

Some may think that in itself would be no great thing; though it is for you to say how Massachusetts would relish having this mixed population, a little more than half colonial Spanish, the rest negro and halfbreed, illiterate, alien in language, alien in ideas of right, interests and government, send in from the mid-Atlantic, nearly a third of the way over to Africa, two Senators to balance the votes of Mr. Hoar and Lodge;—for you to say how Massachusetts would regard the spectacle of her Senatorial vote nullified, and one-third of her representation in the House offset on questions, for instance, of sectional and tropical interest, in the government of this Continent, and in the administration of this precious heritage of our fathers.

Or, suppose Massachusetts to be so little Yankee (in the best sense still) that she could bear all this without murmur or objection:—is it to be imagined that she can lift other States in this generation to her altruistic level? How would Kansas for example enjoy being balanced in the Senate, and nearly balanced in the House, on questions relating to the irrigation of her arid plains, or the protection of her beet-root industry, or on any others affecting the great central regions of this continent by these voices from the watery waste of the ocean? Or how would West Virginia or Oregon or Connecticut, or half a dozen others of similar population, regard it, to be actually outvoted in their own home, on their own continent, by this Spanish and negro waif from the mid-Atlantic?

All this, in itself, may seem to some unimportant, negligible, even trivial. At any rate it would be inevitable; since no one is wild enough to believe that Puerto Rico can be turned back to Spain, or bartered away, or abandoned by the generation that took it. But make its people citizens now, and you have already made it, potentially, a State. Then behind Puerto Rico stands Cuba, and behind Cuba, in time, stand the whole of the West Indies, on whom that law of political gravitation which John Quincy Adams described, will be perpetually acting with redoubled force. And behind them,—no, far ahead of them,—abreast of Puerto Rico itself, stand the Philippines! The Constitution which our Fathers reverently ordained for the United States of *America* is thus tortured by its professed friends into a crazy quilt, under whose dirty folds

must huddle the United States of America, of the West Indies, of the East Indies, and of Polynesia; and Pandemonium is upon us.

The degrada-  
tion of the  
Republic.

I implore you, as thinking men, pause long enough to realize the degradation of the Republic thus calmly contemplated by those who proclaim this to be our Constitutional duty toward our possessions. The Republican institutions I have been trained to believe in were institutions founded, like those of New England, on the Church and the School House. They constitute a system only likely to endure among a people of high virtue and high intelligence. The Republican Government built up on this continent, while the most successful in the history of the world, is also the most complicated, the most expensive and often the slowest. Such are its complications and checks and balances and interdependencies, which tax the intelligence, the patience and the virtue of the highest Caucasian development, that it is a system absolutely unworkable by a group of Oriental and tropical races, more or less hostile to each other, whose highest type is a Chinese and Malay halfbreed, and among whom millions, a majority possibly, are far below the level of the pure Malay.

What holds a nation together, unless it be community of interests, character and language, and contiguous territory? What would more thoroughly insure its speedily flying to pieces than the lack of every one of these requisites? Over and over the clearest-eyed students of history have predicted our own downfall even as a continental Republic, in spite of our measurable enjoyment of all of them. How near we all believed we came to it once or twice! How manifestly under the incongruous hodge-podge of additions to the Union thus proposed, we should be organizing with Satanic skill the exact conditions which have invariably led to such downfalls elsewhere!

Before the advent of the United States, the history of the world's efforts at Republicanism was a monotonous record of failure. Your very schoolboys are taught the reason. It was because the average of intelligence and morality was too low; because they lacked the self-restrained, self-governing quality, developed in the Anglo-Saxon bone and fibre through all the centuries since Runnymede; because they grew unwieldy and lost cohesion by reason of unrelated territory, alien races and languages, and inevitable territorial and climatic conflicts of interest.

On questions vitally affecting the welfare of this Continent it

is inconceivable, unthinkable, that even altruistic Massachusetts should tolerate having two Senators and thirteen Representatives neutralized by as many from Mindanao. Yet Mindanao has a greater population than Massachusetts, and its Mahometan Malays are as keen for the conduct of public affairs, can talk as much — and look as shrewdly for the profit of it!

There are cheerful, happy-go-lucky public men, who assure us that the National digestion has been proved equal to anything. Has it? Are we content, for example, with the way we have dealt with the negro problem in the Southern States? Do we think the suffrage question there is now on a permanent basis, which either we, or our Southern friends can be proud of, while we lack the courage either honestly to enforce the rule of the majority, or honestly to sanction a limitation of suffrage within lines of intelligence and thrift? How well would our famous National digestion probably advance, if we filled up our Senate with twelve or fourteen more Senators, representing conditions incomparably worse?

Is it said this danger is imaginary? At this moment some of the purest and most patriotic men in Massachusetts, along with a great many of the very worst in the whole country, are vehemently declaring that our new possessions are already a part of the United States, that in spite of the treaty which reserved the question of citizenship and political status for Congress, their people are already citizens of the United States, and that no part of the United States can be arbitrarily and permanently excluded from Statehood.

The immediate contention, to be sure, is only about Puerto Rico, and it is only a very little island. But who believes he can stop the avalanche? What wise man at least will take the risk of starting it? Who imagines that we can take in Puerto Rico and keep out nearer islands when they come? Powerful elements are already pushing Cuba. Practically everybody recognizes now that we must retain control of Cuba's foreign relations. But beyond that, the same influences that came so near hurrying us into a recognition of the Cuban Republic and the Cuban debt are now sure that Cuba will very shortly be so "Americanized" (that is, overrun with American speculators) that it cannot be denied admission — that in fact it will be as American as Florida! And, after Cuba, the deluge! Who fancies that we could then keep Santo Domingo and Hayti out; or any West India island that applied; or our friends, the Kanakas? Or who fancies that after the baser sort have once tasted

blood in the form of such rotten-borough States, and have learned to form their larger combinations with them, we shall still be able to admit as a matter of right a part of the territory exacted from Spain, and yet deny admission as a matter of right to the rest?

The Nation has lately been renewing its affectionate memories of a man who died in his effort to hold on, with or without their consent, to the States we already have on this continent, but who never dreamed of casting a dragnet over the world's archipelagoes for more. Do we remember his birthday and forget his words? "This Government, (meaning that under the Constitution ordained for the United States of *America*,) this Government cannot permanently endure, half slave, half free." Who disputes it now? Well, then, can it endure half civilized and enlightened, half barbarous and pagan; half white, half black, brown, yellow and mixed; half northern and western, half tropical and Oriental; one half a homogeneous Continent, the other half in myriads of islands, scattered halfway around the globe, but all eager to participate in ruling this Continent which our fathers with fire and sword redeemed from barbarism and subdued to the uses of the highest civilization.

Clamor that  
need not  
disturb.

I will not insult your intelligence or your patriotism by imagining it possible that in view of such considerations you could consent to the madman's policy of taking these islands we control into full partnership with the States of this Union. Nor need you be much disturbed by the interested outcries as to the injustice you do by refusing to admit them.

When it is said you are denying the natural rights Mr. Jefferson proclaimed, you can answer that you are giving these people, in their distant islands, the identical form of government Mr. Jefferson himself gave to the territories on this continent which he bought. When it is said you are denying our own cardinal doctrine of self-government, you can point to the arrangements for establishing every partiele of self-government with which these widely different tribes can be safely trusted, consistently with your responsibility for the preservation of order and the protection of life and property in that archipelago; and the pledge of more, the moment they are found capable of it. When you are asked, as a leading champion asked the other night at Philadelphia, "Does your liberation of one people give you the right to subjugate another?" you can answer him: "No, nor to allow and aid Aguinaldo to subjugate

them either, as you proposed." When the idle quibble that after Dewey's victory Spain had no sovereignty to cede is repeated, it may be asked why acknowledge then that she did cede it in Cuba and Puerto Rico, and deny that she could cede it in the Philippines? Finally, when they tell you in mock heroics, appropriated from the great days of the anti-slavery struggle for the cause now of a pinchbeek Washington, that no results of the irrevocable past two years are settled, that not even the title to our new possessions is settled, and never will be until it is settled according to their notions, you can answer that then the title to Massachusetts is not settled, nor the title to a square mile of land in most of the States from ocean to ocean. Over practically none of it did we assume sovereignty by the consent of the inhabitants.

Quite possibly these controversies may embarrass the Government and threaten the security of the party in power. New and perplexing responsibilities often do that. But is it to the interest of the sincere and patriotic among the discontented to produce either result? The one thing sure is that no party in power in this country will dare abandon these new possessions. That being so, do those of you who regret it prefer to lose all influence over the outcome? While you are repining over what is beyond recall, events are moving on. If you do not help shape them, others, without your high principle and purity of motive, may. Can you wonder if, while you are harassing the Administration with impracticable demands for an abandonment of territory which the American people will not let go, less unselfish influences are busy presenting candidates for all the offices in its organization? If the friends of a proper Civil Service persist in chasing the ignis fatuus of persuading Americans to throw away territory, while the politicians are busy crowding their favorites into the territorial offices, who will feel free from self-reproach at the results? Grant that the situation is bad. Can there be a doubt of the duty to make the best of it? Do you ask how? By being an active patriot, not a passive one. By exerting, and exerting now, when it is needed, every form of influence, personal, social, political, moral—the influence of the Clubs, the Chambers of Commerce, the manufactories, the Colleges and the Churches, in favor of the purest, the ablest, the most scientific, the most disinterested—in a word the best possible Civil Service for the new possessions that the conscience and the capacity of America can produce, with

Where is your  
real interest?

the most liberal use of all the material available from native sources.

I have done. I have no wish to argue, to defend or to attack. I have sought only to point out what I conceive to be the present danger and the present duty. It is not to be doubted that all such considerations will summon you to the high resolve that you will neither shame the Republic by shirking the duty its own victory entails, nor despoil the Republic by abandoning its rightful possessions, nor degrade the Republic by admissions of unfit elements to its Union; but that you will honor it, enrich it, ennoble it, by doing your utmost to make the administration of these possessions worthy of the Nation that Washington founded and Lincoln preserved. My last word is an appeal to stand firm and stand all together for the Continental Union and for a pure Civil Service for the Islands.



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